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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 TEL AVIV 001613

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

NEA FOR BURNS/SATTERFIELD
NEA/SA/EX FOR AUSTIN-FERGUSON; DEPT FOR DS/IP/NEA;
DEPT FOR DS/IP/ITA; DRL FOR A/S CRANER;
NSC FOR ABRAMS/DANIN;
USAID FOR DCHA, DCHA/FPP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [CASC](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [GZ](#)

SUBJECT: THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND MARCH 13-15, 2004
(1600 HOURS LOCAL) -- SUICIDE ATTACK BY TWO GAZA RESIDENTS
IN ASHDOD; SIX PALESTINIANS KILLED IN GAZA; ONE PALESTINIAN
KILLED IN WEST BANK.

THIS IS A JOINT MESSAGE FROM EMBASSY TEL AVIV AND CONGEN
JERUSALEM.

[11.](#) (SBU) Summary. At approximately 1630 hours March 14, two 18-year-old residents of a Gaza refugee camp blew themselves up at the Ashdod port, killing 10 and injuring 15. Hamas and Islamic Jihad took joint responsibility for the attack. The IDF killed one Palestinian when responding to a roadside explosion near an IDF jeep on patrol near Taluza on March 13. During the reporting period, 26 Palestinians were injured during three separate anti-barrier clashes. In one of those incidents Palestinians threw a firebomb, damaging an IDF bulldozer. Nine Palestinians and one AmCit were arrested during the reporting period. The AmCit was participating in an anti-barrier demonstration northwest of Jerusalem. In Gaza, the IDF shot and killed six suspected Palestinian terrorists March 13-15. One Palestinian was lightly wounded March 15 when the IDF targeted two Gaza City workshops where Kassem rockets were allegedly manufactured. In addition, Palestinians fired six mortar shells and three anti-tank missiles, according to the IDF. In the wake of the March 14 terror attack in Ashdod, the Erez Crossing was closed to Palestinian workers on March 15. End Summary.

West Bank

[12.](#) (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Death: The IDF killed one Palestinian March 13 during clashes in Taluza village, near Nablus.

-- Injury: The IDF wounded seven Palestinians March 14 when protesters tried to prevent work on the separation barrier northwest of Jerusalem. One of the protesters threw a firebomb, which damaged an Israeli bulldozer but caused no injuries. Work did not continue on the barrier after the protest.

-- Injury: The IDF injured one Palestinian March 14 in Bethlehem when clashes broke out on the margins of a demonstration mourning the death of Abu Abbas in Iraq.

-- Injury: Palestinians lightly injured an Israeli motorist March 14 when they threw stones at the motorist's car as it traveled on Route 443 in the West Bank.

-- Injury: The IDF injured seven Palestinians March 13 in Nilin village, where clashes erupted during protests against work on the separation barrier.

-- Injury: The IDF injured 12 Palestinians with tear gas and rubber-coated bullets during an anti-barrier clash March 15 near Dir Qaddis village.

-- Bomb: A roadside charge blew up near an IDF jeep on patrol in Taluza village, near Nablus. No one was injured. This incident led to an Israeli response that left one Palestinian dead (see &Death8).

[13.](#) (SBU) ARRESTS:

-- The IDF arrested two Palestinians throughout the West Bank March 13.

-- The IDF arrested seven Palestinians throughout the West Bank March 14-15.

-- The IDF arrested one AmCit March 14 during a protest against the separation barrier northwest of Jerusalem. She was being transferred to a holding facility for women in Hadera as of 1600 hours local.

[14.](#) (SBU) INCURSIONS/DEMOLITIONS:

-- The IDF mounted an incursion into Tulkarem March 15 and took over four houses to use as observation posts.

GAZA

15. (SBU) ATTACKS:

--Deaths: According to the IDF, two Palestinians were shot by IDF soldiers near the Nahal Oz Crossing on the morning of March 13. The Palestinians were suspected of attempting to infiltrate Nahal Oz. According to Israel Radio, a Kalashnikov rifle, bullet clips, and hand grenades were found next to the bodies.

-- The IDF also reported that it shot and killed three Palestinians carrying an explosive device near Netzarim at 0930 hours March 14. The IDF subsequently dismantled the explosive device.

-- According to UNRWA, on the morning of March 15 the IDF shot and killed a Palestinian in the Shoka area of Rafah. The IDF reported that the Palestinian was a suspect shot during an arrest attempt.

-- Injuries: According to UNRWA, in the early morning hours of March 15, one Palestinian was slightly injured when IDF helicopters shot 10 missiles into two workshops suspected of producing Kassem rockets in Gaza City in retaliation for the March 14 Ashdod bombings. (See Israel, below.)

-- WAFA (Palestinian News Agency) reported that a 14-year-old Palestinian was wounded in the shoulder by IDF gunfire in the early morning hours of March 14.

-- Mortars/Rockets/Hand Grenades: The IDF reported that Palestinians fired at least five mortar shells in three separate incidents March 13: at 0750 hours March 14 at least two shells were fired at Netzarim, at 1245 at least two shells were fired at an IDF outpost west of Khan Yunis, and at 1730 hours a mortar shell was fired at Dugit.

-- The IDF reported that Palestinians fired a mortar at IDF soldiers located north of Netzarim at 1715 hours March 14, and an anti-tank missile at an IDF outpost near Neve Dekalim at 2140 hours. IDF also reported that two hand grenades were used against IDF soldiers near Kissufim Crossing. No injuries were reported.

-- Israel radio reported that Palestinians fired an anti-tank rocket at a bus carrying civilians on the Karni-Netzarim road on the morning of March 15. UNRWA reported that two anti-tank rockets and a roadside charge were used against the bus. Israel Radio reported that the bus was damaged but no injuries were reported.

-- Catch-up: At 1225 hours March 12, Palestinians fired an anti-tank missile at Netzarim village, according to the IDF

-- Shootings: In addition to the IDF initiated shooting of two Palestinians noted in Deaths, above, during the reporting period the IDF reported nine additional instances where Palestinians shot at IDF soldiers in various locations in Gaza.

-- Explosions: Nil.

16. (SBU) ARRESTS: Nil. (But see "Deaths," above.)

17. (SBU) INCURSIONS/DEMOLITIONS: Nil.

18. (SBU) BORDER CROSSINGS/CHECKPOINTS

-- Route Four (Salahadeen Road), the main north-south traffic artery, was open for Palestinians during the reporting period.

-- In the wake of the Ashdod bombings, Erez Crossing was closed March 15. The Erez Industrial Zone was open.

-- Sufa Crossing was open March 14, but closed March 15 in the wake of the Ashdod bombings.

-- Karni Terminal was open during the reporting period for the import and export of goods into the Gaza Strip.

-- Rafah Terminal was open for Palestinian travelers during the reporting period.

-- Tel al-Sultan checkpoint and Toufah checkpoint was open for departures only on March 15, according to UNRWA.

17. (SBU) POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS:

According to press reports, the Palestinian Authority

released four Palestinians suspected of carrying out the bombing of a U.S. diplomatic convoy March 15. Three U.S. embassy personnel were killed in that attack, which took place near the Erez crossing.

Israel

18. (SBU) At approximately 1630 hours March 14, two 18-year-old residents of a Gaza refugee camp blew themselves up at the Ashdod port, killing 10 and injuring 15. Hamas and Islamic Jihad took joint responsibility for the attack.

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KURTZER